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The goddess of Mercy, Kuan-Yin 觀音, who gives sons to her worshippers *sung tsz niang-niang* 送子娘娘, also called *san p'o niang-niang* 三婆娘娘 *or san hsiao* 三霄, is believed to be in the house for the first three days after the confinement; at the end of this time the father makes her an offering of wine, incense and paper, behind the bedroom door, where the goddess is supposed to lodge.

At the end of ten days the the father's mother and other relatives are invited to a feast, and presents of rice, eggs and chickens are brought to the family.

At the end of a month a feast is given, called *t'ang ping* (or *mi* or *yüeh*) *chiu* 湯餅 (or 米 or 月) 酒; all those who have given presents are invited. After this the mother may go to the kitchen or the well; before this many will not speak to her, and Buddhist devotees are especially fearful about doing so.

After fulfilling forty days, *man sz̆-shih t'ien* 滿四十天, the mother may visit her friends and show off the baby. In complimenting the parents it is safe to say that the baby is ugly 醜, or to use any other derogatory terms, so that the demons will not want it.

Having fulfilled 120 days the mother may go to the temple and give thanks to the idols.

At the end of the first year 滿週歲 *man chou sui*, the mother-in-law sends presents to the child. The old custom of this season was to lay before the child objects representing different occupations in life, and his training would afterwards be directed according to the object he grasped. This was called *chua nien* 抓年, grasping the year.

The above are some of the customs connected with ordinary cases. Women who are barren or son-less employ various methods to obtain such issue.

They beg a prayer-tally, 求籤 *ch'iu ch'ien* from a particular idol, take it home and keep it on the family altar. These tallies are notched pieces of bamboo, kept at the idol shrine for divination purposes.

They become vegetarians; this often means that they also distribute much rice to the poor. There are many kinds of vegetarian vows, such as *Kuan-yin chai* 觀音齋, (kept on the 9th, or by some on the 2nd, 6th and 9th, of each month);

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Such customs as are noted above have a great hold on otherwise quite enlightened people.

The following customs are connected with the protection of children.

If during the first month or two of the child's life it cries a great deal, this request is put out: 小兒夜哭請君念讀若還不哭請君萬福; "My little one cries in the night, will good men take note and read; if after this it does not cry may ten thousand blessings rest on you."

People who are afraid of their child becoming a priest make a priest's hat and other garments for it. They think the spirits will be thus deceived and suppose the child is a priest already.

For fear a child may not live long a ring is put round its neck and locked, *so kuan* 鎖關. This is even done to sick adults, with the idea of locking in the life that it may not leave the body.

With the same idea an old horse-shoe is made into a bangle and locked on the child's wrist—*ta ma-chang ch'üan* 打馬掌圈.

Money also is collected from many other families 化千家錢 *hua ch'ien-chia ch'ien*, and made into a silver, iron or bronze collar, which is locked on the child's neck.

A tablet called *ch'ang-ming p'ai* 長命牌 is made up of the characters for long life, riches and honour. It may be worn suspended round the child's neck or on his cap. It is sometimes the gift of friends. A tablet with the figures of the Eighteen Lo-han is similarly worn.

A coin-shaped tablet on the cap with the Eight Diagrams 八卦 *pa kua* engraven on it is supposed to repel evil influences.

In the same way are worn the images or names of the 12 Buddhist *pratyêka* who were disciples of the goddess of Mercy 十二圓覺 *shih-êrh yüan-chüeh*; or of the twenty-eight constellations; or of the 36 or 72 famous generals who are supposed to be able to ward off demons.

An embroidered cat on the cap, with eyes and mouth facing outward, is worn to drive away demons. A monkey embroidered on the shoulder has similar virtue.

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The wearing of ear-rings is supposed to help a child to live, as giving it something extra to hold on to. 852 782

Other objects thus carried on the cap or elsewhere on the person as preservatives are the image of Lao Tzŭ, or of the Eight Immortals 八仙 *pa hsien*; or of the the character 壽 *shou* longevity, with five bats *fu*, 蝠 (symbol for happiness, punningly for 福 *fu*); or 100 silver badges with *shou* 壽, wishing the child may living 100 years; or the image of sun and moon; or that of a bald, long-bearded old man.

Another way is to tie the hand, foot or neck with red, black or green cord. The knots used may be 72 in number, 36, 28 or 12, signifying the same as in a paragraph above. These cords are also worn by adults.

Boys who are expected to be good at business, or girls who, it is hoped, will be clever at needle-work, wear respectively an abacus 算盤 *suan p'an* and scissors 剪刀 *chien tao* as badges.

The image of the god of smallpox and measles 痘母神 *tou-mu shén*, is taken from door to door in a box by a very disreputable looking person. Women offer to it shoes, rice or money, and then expect their children will not succumb to these diseases. 751 852

Bridges and stone tablets 碑 *pei* are worshipped to gain their protection for children (see chapter on Passing crises); or a willow tree; this is a cheap wood, not much wanted, and the hope is that no spirits will want the child.

The length of time during which a child is suckled is three years. Some of course do not have so long, and a few have a longer time. One man I know, over 70 and very robust, regards his present good health as due to his mother nursing him till he was over six years old. The custom of three years of mourning for a parent is based on this three years' nursing. 853

As to infanticide, 丟兒溺女 *tiu êrh ni nü*: if male children are thrown out it is generally because they are illegitimate. Girls are drowned or starved by both rich and poor; by the rich, it is said, even more than by the poor. The rich suppose that a disproportionate number of girls shows the family stock is degenerating; the poor destroy 847

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CHAPTER II

PASSING THROUGH CRISES

(OR, CROSSING THE BARRIERS 度關 *tu kuan*)

To take children through the important crises in their lives is the work of a sorcerer. On consultation the fortune-teller announces the critical times in the child's life, when that life may be in danger. The sorcerer's help is then asked for, and he invokes the aid of the *k'ai-kuan t'u-ti* 開關土地 the precinct god who opens barriers.

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The following are a few of the crises or barriers which may occur in a child's life, and with respect to which he must be carefully guarded.

There is the 短命關 *tuan ming kuan* or short-life barrier, which means that the child may die at any age before 12 years. At 12 the barrier or crisis is over. There is also the 100-days barrier; the child is not safe till past that age.

The Buddhist-priest barrier 和尙關 *ho-shang kuan*, means there is danger that the boy will run away from home and become a priest, which is equivalent to losing him altogether.

The "knock-door crisis" 撞門關 *ch'uang mên kuan* means there is danger that the child some time visiting a neighbour's house will get bitten by a dog or catch

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some infectious disease. This barrier is avoided in the following fashion. The parents take the child out for a walk, and accost the first person they meet, pedlar, beggar, or what not. They salute him and tell him the matter, asking him to become surety for the child. If he consents he will give the child a new name and become his *kan tieh* 乾爹 informal adoptive father (or *kan ma* 乾媽 adoptive mother). The person is then invited to the house and food put before him, and the same evening the necessary ceremony, much the same as in sorcery, is performed in the house.

The danger may be that the child must pass the *lei-kung kuan* Thunder-god barrier, or be killed, as the Chinese say, by thunder. Such death is regarded as evidence of the special displeasure of Heaven.

Another crisis is the *ch'ü-ming kuan* 取命關 or taking-life barrier. There is danger of the child's life being taken by a demon. In this case a butcher is asked to become surety or adoptive father, because he carries a knife and can thus frighten away the slaying demon. Much the same ceremony is performed as in the "knock-door crisis."

It may be threatened that some heavy or sharp article shall fall on the child and kill it; this is a *tao-chên kuan* 刀砧關 or knife and anvil crisis. A butcher with his knife or a blacksmith with his sledgehammer is sought as *kan tieh*.

The danger may be that of drowning, *lo-shui kuan* 落水關. Any willing person may be made *kan tieh* in this case.

The *p'ei-ma kuan* 披麻關 or donning-sackcloth barrier, means that there is danger the child may be left an orphan, or that he will fall sick if he sees anyone in mourning.

The crisis to be dreaded may be that the child will one day fall through a hole in some bridge and be drowned. This is the *tuan-ch'iao kuan* 斷橋關 or broken-bridge crisis.

The child may be liable to the *chiang-chün kuan* 將軍關; that is, he may be accidentally shot. To avert this calamity, or to get past this barrier he must worship at the tomb of some military general 將軍, or at some memorial stone. Such a lad will most likely carry through life the nickname *pei* 碑 or tablet, because he worshipped at the stone slab.

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There is a crisis recurring at 3, 6 and 9 years old, *san liu chiu sui kuan* 三六九歲關. The child with this threat on him is not allowed to travel far or visit any house where a corpse or coffin may be till he is ten years old.

The white tiger barrier 白虎關 *pai-hu kuan*, means that a dog will bite the child, or a demon attack him, or that he will be left an orphan.

There is fear that the child will be made ill by the sight of blood; this is called the blood-dish barrier 血盤關 *hsüeh-p'ên kuan*. A butcher is the proper *kan tieh* to be sought for in this case.

There is danger lest the child should be scalded by the upsetting of a kettle of water or burned by the fire-brazier in the winter. The people are in the habit of putting the fire-basket under their clothes or even taking it to bed with them with the result that many lives are lost and much property destroyed.